

Choose zero-phosphorus fertilizer

July 12, 2012

When deciding to fertilize your lawn, please help us protect our waters. Make wise choices about frequency and application rates to minimize runoff carrying nutrients into the lake. If you must fertilize, avoid fertilizers that contain phosphorus. Remember, it's phosphorus that accelerates algae growth in our lakes and rivers. Most lawns and gardens already contain adequate – and often excessive – amounts of phosphorus.

Phosphorus is an essential nutrient for plants. However, when too much phosphorus makes its way into our lakes and streams it promotes the rapid growth of weeds and algae and decreases water clarity, often turning lakes green. Decaying algae also depletes oxygen in the water, so that fish can no longer thrive. Human activities contribute a great deal to the amount of phosphorus that enters a lake or stream.

Often the average available soil phosphorus concentration is approximately three to four times higher than the amount needed to maintain a healthy lawn.

Consider this – one pound of phosphorus in runoff can result in 500 pounds of algae growth!

If you follow the instructions on a bag of fertilizer containing phosphorus, you may be adding over 50 pounds of phosphorus to a half-acre lot each year. Look at the numbers on the bag; the second number is the percentage of phosphorus available from the bag.

